

*Voting Practices in the United Nations—2007*

## REALIZATION OF U.S. PRIORITIES

The United States achieved several objectives during the 62<sup>nd</sup> session of the General Assembly, but once again notes that inadequate progress was made in the General Assembly on the issue of UN reform. The United States believes that a more ethical, effective, transparent, and accountable United Nations will be better equipped to promote peace and security, economic development, and human rights and democracy by maximizing the best use of resources provided by member states, and will continue its efforts to advance these vital reforms.

The General Assembly adopted a number of annual resolutions which the United States has consistently opposed. These included several resolutions on the Middle East. Three of those are described in the Important Vote section (Section IV). On one of the 19 resolutions (A/Res/62/109), the United States mistakenly abstained. The U.S. position on that resolution is described in the Report Annex and tabulated as an abstention in Section III.

The United States believes that resolutions dealing with the Middle East should be consistent with the principles of a performance-based process and tied to a vision of democratic Israeli and Palestinian states living in peace, and should not perpetuate institutional bias against Israel.

This year in the General Assembly the United States assumed a leading role in negotiating a resolution condemning the use of rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations, including in conflict and related situations, and urged member states to take special measures to protect women and girls from this type of violence. This was the first resolution of its kind. It underscores not only the U.S. view that gender-based violence is an issue of shared international concern, but also our commitment to ending the particularly atrocious crime of using rape as a tool of conflict or oppression. The resolution was adopted by consensus (see Section IV).

This year also witnessed the first non Holocaust-related resolution introduced by Israel and adopted by the General Assembly (A/Res/62/190). While some delegations from countries that traditionally oppose Israel in the United Nations abstained on the vote for this resolution (*Agricultural Technology for Development*), it is noteworthy that no country voted against the resolution (see Section IV).

In the Third Committee, the United States was pleased by the defeat of a no-action motion on a resolution addressing the human rights situation in Iran, and the adoption of that resolution as well as human rights resolutions on Belarus, Myanmar (Burma), and North Korea. Successes in the Third Committee were especially encouraging because of the Human Rights Council's continuing focus on Israel and its failure to take action on pressing human rights situations.

## I—Introduction

### FORMAT AND METHODOLOGY

The format and presentation of this report are consistent with provisions of Public Law 101-246 as amended by Public Law 108-447, and the methodology employed is the same as that used since the report's inception.

The tables in this report provide a measurement of the voting coincidence of UN member countries with the United States. However, readers are cautioned about interpreting voting coincidence percentages. In Section III (General Assembly Overall Votes), Section IV (General Assembly Important Votes and Consensus Actions), and the Annex, the percentages in the last column of the tables, under "votes only," are calculated using only votes on which both the United States and the other country in question voted Yes or No; not included are those instances when either state abstained or was absent. Abstentions and absences are often difficult to interpret, but they make a mathematical difference, sometimes significant, in the percentage results. The inclusion of the number of abstentions and absences in the tables of this report enables the reader to consider them in calculating voting coincidence percentages.

The percentages in the second-to-last column of the tables, under "including consensus," offer another perspective on General Assembly activity. These figures, by presenting the percentage of voting coincidence with the United States after including consensus resolutions as additional identical votes, more accurately reflect the extent of cooperation and agreement in the General Assembly. Since not all states are equally active at the United Nations, the report credits to each country a portion of the 170 consensus resolutions based on its participation in the 93 recorded Plenary votes. Each country's participation rate was calculated by dividing the number of Yes/No/Abstain votes it cast in the Plenary (i.e., the number of times it was not absent) by the total number of Plenary votes). However, this calculation assumes, for want of an attendance record, that all countries were present or absent for consensus resolutions in the same ratio as for recorded votes.

Moreover, the content of resolutions should be considered in interpreting the figures in either of the aforementioned columns. There may be overwhelming agreement with the U.S. position on a matter of less importance to the United States and less support for a resolution it considers more important. These differences are difficult to quantify and to present in two coincidence figures.

Questions about this report may be directed to the Bureau of International Organization Affairs in the Department of State.

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